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SERMON;

INTENDED AS A

DISSUASIVE

FROM THE

PRACTICE

OF

DUELLING.

BY

A MINISTER of the CHURCH of ENGLAND.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

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COLOSSIANS III. 13.

FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER, AND FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, IF ANY MAN HAVE A QUARREL AGAINST ANY: EVEN AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU, SO ALSO DO YE.

SHOULD he deal with our ſiſter, as with an harlot? This was the reply of Simeon and Levi to the remonſtrance of their father Jacob. They had ſo highly reſented an injury offered to their family, that under the ſanction of a treacherous covenant, they had ſlain the inhabitants of Shalem, while they were incapable either of

reſiſtance, or of defence. Not ſatisfied with this gratification of their revenge, they had aggravated the miſery of the unhappy ſurvivors by the moſt inſulting acts of injuſtice, and cruelty; they had driven away their flocks, and their herds; they had ſpoiled their houſes; and having thus reduced them to all the calamities of poverty, they had carried their wives, and their little ones into captivity.

Jacob, the violence of whoſe paſſions was mellowed down by age, and experience, though he felt ſeverely the diſgrace of his daughter, was both ſhocked by the cruelty of his ſons, and alarmed for the conſequences of it. "Ye have fixed," ſaid the venerable old man, "an inde-"lible ſtain on me, and on my family; our names will "be recorded with horror, and deteſtation; and as ye "have maſſacred the inhabitants of this city, what can "you expect, but that the injury will be amply revenged "on yourſelves, on your father, on your poſterity?" The ſons of Jacob, totally unaffected by all theſe conſiderations, made that conciſe reply, which, though dictated by their paſſion, was in ſome meaſure intended as a juſtification of their conduct, *Should he deal with our ſiſter, as with an harlot?*

Though the manners of men are variouſly modified by time, by cuſtom, by accident, their paſſions are uniformly

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the ſame; and an injury naturally raiſes in the mind a deſire of revenge. The feelings of Simeon and Levi are the feelings of mankind in general; and while we read over *their* ſtory with horror, we forget how many there are, whom the moſt trifling affront has armed againſt their companion, their relation, their friend. The ſons of Jacob had experienced the moſt mortifying inſult; their favourite, their only ſiſter, had been ſeduced, had been violated by a ſtranger; their pride was all on fire; under the influence of that dangerous paſſion they perpetrated a deed, at which humanity recoils, and from which juſtice turns aſide her face. But how ſeldom does it happen, that he who is eager to allay the fever of revenge with the blood of his antagoniſt can plead the ſame provocation? A look miſunderſtood, a word ill-explained, thrown out perhaps in the eagerneſs of argument, under the ſanction of familiar acquaintance, or convivial feſtivity, ſhall become the warrant of death. An inſult *might* have been intended, and an atonement *muſt* be made. If either of the parties is too raſh, or too high-ſpirited to ſubmit, the deciſion is referred to the ſword. Nor is this done during the warmth of reſentment, when ſudden paſſion might have been alledged as ſome palliation at leaſt; but after cool deliberation, after having carefully

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ſettled every temporal concern, after having ſeen the face of his wife and his infants, after having lain down to ſleep, the father of a family goes forth in the morning to meet the intended victim of his reſentment, and leaves it to the uncertain iſſue of combat, whether he ſhall be the murther'd, or the murtherer.

But you have received an injury, perhaps aggravated by an inſult. How then? will you kill? The laws of your country require blood for blood; and in this they coincide with the poſitive law of your Creator. Beſides, the man againſt whoſe life you are preparing to arm yourſelf, is a man of integrity: his virtues, if you ſhould deſtroy him, will riſe up in the judgment, and plead againſt you with all the eloquence of angels. Perhaps there may be ſome miſtake, ſome miſrepreſentation, ſomething which may admit of a milder explanation. Or if not, will nothing ſatisfy but his blood? Conſider; he has parents, who are grey-headed, who are already almoſt worn out with age, and pain; would you aggravate their diſtreſs? He has a wife, who loves him with the moſt tender affection: would you deſtroy her alſo? He has children, who depend upon him for their ſupport: would you make them orphans? He has ſins, of which he has not yet repented: would you ſend him with all his follies

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and vices upon his head, to make up an account with his God?—Theſe, and a thouſand ſuch conſiderations, have no weight. The ſenſe of an injury, whether real or imaginary, takes entire poſſeſſion of the ſoul, and hurries on the man, who thinks it beneath him to digeſt it, to acts of frenzy, of deſperation, and of death.

Suppoſe, however, that no tenderneſs be due to your antagoniſt; that he has no parent, no wife, no child, to lament him; that he is as virtuous as he ever will be; and that a longer life will more probably increaſe than diminiſh both the number, and weight of his tranſgreſſions; is there nothing due to your own connections, to your own friends, to your own family, to yourſelf? Are you ſure that you are fit to die? Are you certain that you are prepared to meet the Judge of the world with the confidence of innocence? When you ſhall arrive at thoſe iron gates which are placed as a barrier between this world, and the next, and which lead to the valley of the ſhadow of death, are you convinc'd, with all your boaſted fortitude, that you ſhall not tremble, as you paſs them! Conſcious that you came thither without any ſummons, what cauſe can you aſſign for your arrival? what plea, what ſubterfuge can you deviſe, which may excuſe, or palliate your appearance? Will you ſay, that

intending to ſlay your neighbour, you was ſlain yourſelf? then are you the murtherer of both; of yourſelf in act, of another in intention.—But even theſe conſiderations are inſufficient to reſtrain that ſpirit of revenge, which will liſten to the ſuggeſtions neither of temporal, nor eternal intereſt. A falſe idea of honour prevails over all other motives: the injury, the inſult, with every taunt, with every provocation which attended it, is painted upon the ſoul in the ſtrongeſt colours, and excludes the wiſe and mild ſuggeſtions of humanity, of charity, of religion, and even of ſelf-love.

But are we not diſciples of Jeſus? are we not profeſſors of that religion, which preſcribes the duties of patience, of forbearance, of univerſal benevolence? are we not enjoined to do good even to our enemies? do we not intreat of God, in our daily prayers, that he will pardon our offences, upon this only condition, that we pardon the offences committed againſt us? With what confidence can a man preſume to offer up this petition, the veſſels of whoſe ſoul are filled with the gall of malice? Knows he not, that every involution of his heart is open to that Being, whom he addreſſes; and that if he attempts to prevaricate with Heaven, his portion will be with the hypocrites?—Or does he mean to ſuſpend his devotion,

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till he has gratified his reſentment, and then return to it with accumulated zeal? Will he then approach the altar, and bear his gift in hands ſtained with human blood? His ſacrifice, alas! will be of no greater efficacy than the ſacrifice of the firſt murtherer, when *the Lord had no reſpect to Cain, and to his offering.* He will find it an irkſome buſineſs to return to the duties of religion, while his conſcience groans under ſuch a load of guilt. He will feel that ſo humiliating a penance is neceſſary to reſtore him even to his former condition, that he may never have reſolution enough to return again, and to *ſeek after his God.*

But it may be urged, "that no man can be always "guarded againſt the perverſeneſs, the inſolence, the "brutality of others; and that he, who is moſt inclined "to peace, may ſometimes receive an inſult, which he "muſt either reſent, or ſubmit to the mortifying impu-"tation of puſillanimity?" How then can he act? if he draws his ſword, the death either of himſelf, or of another, will be the probable conſequence: if he pardons, he is infamous. Bleſſed Jeſus! that ever ſuch an opinion ſhould prevail among thy diſciples, that it is an honour to revenge, and a diſgrace to forgive!—But when cuſtom not only approves, but ſanctifies a crime, where

is he who has ſpirit enough to oppoſe it? Cruel is the alternative to which men are reduced, when they muſt incur either the contempt of their companions, or the reſentment of their God. It is the principle itſelf, therefore, that ſhould be combated: it is the falſe opinion, that ſhould be corrected: and it is the duty of thoſe, who preach the goſpel of peace, to endeavour, at leaſt, to dethrone this uſurper, this Phantom which Faſhion has ſet up as an object of adoration, this courage without virtue, this honour without religion; which accoſts us indeed under a moſt ſpecious appearance, which aſſumes the ſemblance of ſomething great and heroic; but, when we examine it accurately, and obſerve the foundation upon which it is built, appears to be compounded of pride, malice, revenge, and all the unkind affections of the ſoul; like that image, which the King of Babylon ſaw in his dream, whoſe ſides were of braſs, whoſe arms were of ſilver, whoſe head was of fine gold, while the baſis which ſupported it was of iron, and of clay.—It is true, indeed, that a ſuperſtitious and impious practice prevailed in the days of our anceſtors, of appealing to the ſword, either for the deciſion of property, the detection of fraud, or the vindication of innocence, when the God of battles was ſuppoſed to declare in favour of the conqueror:

conqueror: but this, together with other modes of trial equally abſurd, has long been baniſh'd. Why then does this inhuman practice remain, when the ſpirit of it is loſt? No one now preſumes to ſuppoſe that victory is a mark of the approbation of that God whoſe poſitive injunctions the conqueror, and the conquered, have equally deſpiſed. Or, can we imagine that our national gallantry is ſupported by this polite homicide? But whence do we learn this leſſon? from experience? Let us look back upon the nations of old: let us turn to the hiſtory of the ancient Romans. Did their enemies find them deficient in perſonal valour? Did they turn their backs in the day of battle? And yet they did not determine every frivolous diſpute by ſingle combat: thoſe horrid feats of barbariſm they left to their ſlaves the gladiators, and to the nations, who profeſs chriſtianity. Why then ſhould that be deemed honourable now, which was then beneath the character of freemen?—From whatever principle this practice was originally derived, it is time to baniſh it from every civilized, much more from every chriſtian ſociety. This can only be done, by ſhunning with contempt, by branding with infamy, every man who is eager to ſhed blood; who, conſcious of the worthleſſneſs of his own life, ſets as little value upon the life of his neighbour.

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Till this be the caſe, no one, I fear, will be hardy enough to ſtem the torrent upon the principle of religion; leſt men ſhould attribute to cowardice, of which, under various ſhapes, they ſee daily inſtances, what really aroſe from a nobler motive, the examples of which are ſo rare. The exclamation of the patriarch Jacob ſhould be invariably applied by the profeſſors of chriſtianity to every faſhionable aſſaſſin: *O my ſoul, come not thou into their ſecret; unto their aſſembly, mine honour, be thou not united: for in their rage they ſlew a man.*

An injury may, indeed, be ſo flagrant, as to cry aloud for an adequate reparation; and in ſuch a caſe, let the man who is injured appeal to the law: that will protect him in his perſon, his fame, and his property. If the offence be ſo ſubtle, and undefined, as to eſcape the cognizance of every human tribunal, let it be referred to him, *to whom vengeance belongeth:* (for in no one inſtance, no, not upon the moſt inſulting provocation, is it lawful for a chriſtian, as an individual, either to expoſe his own life, or to attack the life of another, except only in the inſtance of ſelf-defence).—But if revenge be not neceſſary for the future protection of others, as well as of ourſelves, let us rejoice that an opportunity is preſented to us of exerciſing that duty, which is the very ſpirit and

eſſence of chriſtianity. It is poſſible, indeed, that our enemy may be ſo ſtubborn, and intractable, that all our indulgence can never melt him, and that he may repeat his offence as often as he receives a pardon; but here alſo we are not left without a direction for our conduct: *Peter ſaid unto Jeſus, Lord, how often ſhall my brother ſin againſt me, and I forgive him? till ſeven times? Jeſus ſaith unto him, I ſay not unto thee until ſeven times, but until ſeventy times ſeven.*

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